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*Statement Made Before the
Committee on Public Health
of the New York Assembly*

JAKOB BOLIN
New York City

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STATEMENT MADE BEFORE THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC HEALTH OF THE NEW YORK
ASSEMBLY

AT THE PUBLIC HEARING ON ASSEMBLY BILL 759, REGULATING
AND LEGALIZING THE PRACTICE OF OSTEOPATHY IN THE
STATE OF NEW YORK AND FIXING PENALTIES FOR
THE VIOLATION THEREOF.

JAKOB BOLIN.
NEW YORK CITY.

The New York Medico-Gymnastic and Massage Society, incorporated under the laws of the state, has a membership of graduates and non-graduates of medicine who practice those branches of therapy, which are denoted in the name of the society. When this society resolved to appear before you through delegates, it was thought advisable that both these elements in its membership should be represented in order that the opinion might not prevail that the physicians among us carried things with a high hand, but to let it be known to you that whatever differences of opinion there may be on other questions, all the members stand hand in hand on this particular one. I have been elected to represent the laity in our society, and to give you our views on this matter.

The questions for me to answer are simply these: what relations exist between osteopathy on the one hand and massage and medicogymnastics on the other? What are their similarities and differences? And how does this bill, if it becomes law, effect those who practice massage and medicogymnastics?

Let me then state that here, as in so many other cases, the old saying slightly changed is true: What is good in osteopathy is not new, what is new is not good. Manipulations and movements have been used in therapy from time immemorial. It is not necessary to refer to the ancients, but you should know that from 1804 they were set into system in Sweden by P. H. Ling; and were in 1813 recognized by the government as a legitimate

branch of therapy, and at the present time they are so recognized. But even in that country where these practices are unqualifiedly better understood than anywhere else, where the course of instruction has a duration of three years, and the students must have a preliminary knowledge corresponding approximately to the academic degree of B. A. before they may even enter upon their professional studies, the government does not allow the independent practice of the graduates of its own institution, but requires a certain amount of co-operation between them and the legalized physicians. In this bill it is proposed to give independent practice to persons who may have taken a course of a month or a correspondence course of a few months. When the standard of medical education in the state has been laboriously raised to approach that of Europe, is it not an arrogance, an audacity, a crime, aye, even a stupidity, which is perhaps still worse, to try to degrade it with one stroke?

The treatment of disease by manipulations and movements is not, then, a new discovery, as claimed. Nor is it new in this country. From Sweden it was introduced into New York by two physicians, the two brothers Taylor, in the fifties, and it is now practiced more or less successfully by several hundred persons all over the country, who have gained no new knowledge from the osteopaths. I have here some works by osteopaths, and some by gymnasts. It was my intention to demonstrate by the pictures in them their similarities of procedure. The denial by the osteopaths of authoritative value to the works published in their name would, however, make such demonstration invalid.

Have our physicians taken any interest in these matters? A great variety of manipulations were collected in 1835, by Dr. Martin, of Lyon, and under the name of massage they have been studied and applied by several of the most noted physicians of our era. The celebrated Esmarch, late surgeon-general of the Prussian army, was one of its most pronounced advocates. Zabludowsky, Mosso, and a host of others have studied its physiology. Dr. Metzger has gained world-fame in its application.

Now these men who come before you to urge this bill, which under the guise of breaking the monopoly of the physicians, endeavor to set up a monopoly in this particular branch, shutting out completely us who have practised long before osteopathy was thought of, these men are simply very poor imitators of their predecessors, very poor not only in so far that they apply only part of the means at our disposal, but poor also in the sense that they apply what they do use upon absolutely false and preposterous grounds. They see dislocations

and subluxations everywhere. Last summer there came under my care a case of locomotor ataxia where they had diagnosed a dislocation of the spine. Less than two months ago I received from one of the most prominent neurologists in the city of New York a patient with localized cerebral venous stasis. They had "discovered" a subluxation in his neck! That is one difference between them and us. We take the diagnosis of the physician. They claim to make their own diagnosis and it is practically always the same. Why, if any one of you should put yourself in their care you would undoubtedly be found to have a dislocation of the neck. And still I will warrant that it is not your heads which have been turned, but theirs—turned completely around and topsy-turvy into the bargain.

The society, which I have the honor to represent, endeavors to gradually embrace all the reputable practitioners in this mode of treatment. And one of the cardinal points in our declaration of faith is this, that there must be co-operation between the physician and us, that the diagnosis lies outside of our sphere, that we are not prepared for it, and this notwithstanding the fact that most of us have looked far deeper into the etiology and pathology of diseases than these gentlemen with their peculiar notions. When we have got the diagnosis made by a reputable physician, we undertake the treatment in suitable cases, and so far as technique is concerned I have yet to learn of undue influence by the medical fraternity, at least the foremost among them. They recognize that those of us who have made a conscientious study of this matter during several years understand it far better than they themselves, while we bow to them without hesitancy so far as diagnosis is concerned.

It is rumored that an esteemed gentleman here present, Mark Twain, is to speak on the opposite side of this question. I do not know what his acquaintance with osteopathy, so-called, may be, but this I do know, that he himself has gained his first insight and benefit from manipulations and movements not from them but from Swedish gymnasts at Sanna in Sweden.

Let this bill become a law and havoc will be played with the health of the community. You will make impossible the endeavors of our society to raise the standard, so as to become an honor to the country. You will frustrate the plan, now in progress, to found a school where the science and art of this branch of therapy may be taught in accord with the doctrines of science. Defeat the bill and you will uphold our hands, and you will shortly see in New York City a school worthy of the imperial state, a school conducted by citizens of this state, a school which shall put the diploma factories in the west to shame.

7 West One Hundred and Twelfth Street.

